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ISRAEL-SYRIA-EGYPT

Tensions eased somewhat in the Middle East yesterday after both Syria and Israel said publicly they intend to abide by the cease-fire agreement.

Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam issued a statement from Damascus reaffirming Syria's commitment to the cease-fire and accusing Israel of waging a "tendentious campaign against Syria" to cover up its own aggressive intentions.

In an attempt to reassure the Israeli public, Defense Minister Peres said on national television Saturday night that he expected developments in the near future to be political rather than military. He characterized the Israeli mobilization as a "precautionary measure" in response to an "escalation of military alertness in Syria." Peres cited the Rabat summit conference, rumors that Syria would not renew the UN observer force's mandate, and Arab assertions concerning Israeli weaknesses as contributory causes of Israeli concern.

On Sunday, Peres issued a statement that there had been a "relaxation of tension" on both sides of the Syrian cease-fire lines. Later, Radio Jerusalem reported that the Israeli ambassador to the US had told Secretary Kissinger that Israel had no aggressive intentions.

In Egypt, the press yesterday featured stories on the urgent dispatch of messages from Sadat to President Ford and Soviet party chief Brezhnev. One news story emphasized reports that Washington and Moscow are anxious to avoid another war in the Middle East. Editorials accused Israel of fomenting the current war scare.

Militarily, both sides remained watchful over the weekend.

[redacted] President Sadat's contacts with his senior military and political advisers were well publicized in the Cairo media yesterday. There have been no direct indications of Syrian military movements.

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Moscow announced on Saturday that Vice Admiral Khovrin, the new commander of the Black Sea Fleet, would pay an official six-day visit to the Syrian port of Latakia beginning November 20. He is aboard a Kynda-class guided-missile cruiser that entered the Mediterranean on November 15. [REDACTED]

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GREECE

Prime Minister Karamanlis' New Democracy Party won a decisive victory in the Greek election yesterday, pulling in about 55 percent of the popular vote for a solid parliamentary majority. Karamanlis' nearest rival was the centrist Center Union - New Forces led by George Mavros, which won about 20 percent of the vote. The United Left--a coalition of two Communist parties and a former Communist front group--won about 9 percent of the vote, having lost votes to Andreas Papandreou's Panhellenic Socialist Movement, which received about 13 percent of the vote. The rightist National Democratic Union got less than 2 percent of the vote.

Although the outcome may change slightly when the results from the Greek islands are received, Papandreou's party is unlikely to receive the 17 percent of the vote necessary to enter the second "distribution" of seats under the electoral law. These seats, about 90 in all, will be divided between the New Democracy and Center Union. Karamanlis' party may get some 200 seats in the 300-member parliament and Mavros' party over 60.

Karamanlis' old party, the conservative National Radical Union, never before received an outright majority of votes in an election. Karamanlis has brought his new party closer to the center and broadened its base; he has also clearly profited from the post-crisis atmosphere under which the election took place. Following the plebiscite on the monarchy scheduled for December 8, which is expected to result in a vote against the restoration of the king, Karamanlis' first priority will be to revise the constitution in order to strengthen the executive.

Karamanlis now has the clear mandate he sought to negotiate on Cyprus. Although his government will not accept a solution that does not involve some satisfactory settlement of the Greek Cypriot refugee problem, he is in a position to be flexible.

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Public opinion will continue to demand a more independent, nationalistic approach to links with NATO and the US, but Karamanlis is now in a position to call the shots, as he would not have been with a more ambiguous mandate from the voters. [REDACTED]

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PORTUGAL

Tensions in Lisbon, brought on late last week by the demands of some moderate Portuguese military officers that the leftist-influenced Armed Forces Movement Coordinating Committee be disbanded, appear to have subsided, at least for the moment.

Over the weekend, spokesmen for several political parties issued statements backing the government. [REDACTED]

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Members of the Armed Forces Movement apparently are attempting to reconcile moderates and militants within the movement. [REDACTED]

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TURKEY

Sadi Irmak, given the task of forming a new government after Ecevit's resignation, has put together a cabinet composed largely of technocrats and other nonpolitical figures. President Koruturk yesterday approved the new government, allowing it to take office with Irmak as prime minister. It will, however, have to face a vote of confidence in parliament in the near future.

At its first meeting yesterday, the new cabinet began drafting a legislative program acceptable to parliament. With parliamentary support, Irmak should be able to head an interim government until a national election can be held next spring or fall.

More than half of the 26 cabinet members are not affiliated with any political party and have backgrounds as career government servants or as university professors, like Irmak himself. Melih Esenbel, currently the Turkish ambassador to Washington, will serve as foreign minister. Ilhami Sancar, [redacted] from the small Republic Reliance Party, will head the Defense Ministry, a position he has held several times in the past.

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Irmak's hopes of putting together a "national coalition" with cabinet ministers drawn from all the major parties apparently foundered on the issue of the timing of a new election. Ecevit's Republican People's Party wants them scheduled for next spring. When the major rightist parties refused to agree to a fixed date, Ecevit announced that his party would not participate in the new government. The Justice Party, Ecevit's major opposition, had earlier declined Irmak's invitation to join the government.

Leaders of the Justice and Republican People's parties said they would decide whether to support Irmak after he presents his program to parliament.

Ecevit has agreed that outgoing Foreign Minister Gunes would remain available to assist the new government on Cyprus and other foreign policy problems. [redacted]

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MOROCCO-UN

Morocco this week will ask the UN's fourth committee, which deals with non-self-governing territories, to refer the dispute over Spanish Sahara to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. Committee deliberations on Spanish Sahara are scheduled to begin today.

The US embassy in Rabat reports that the Moroccans have prepared a detailed draft resolution they hope the committee will adopt and submit to the General Assembly for approval. The draft will endorse an earlier Moroccan request for an advisory court opinion and specify the questions the court should address.

A senior Moroccan Foreign Ministry official has told the US ambassador that his government expected the resolution to provide an alternative, such as a referendum, in the event the court failed to hand down a clear-cut decision on rival Moroccan and Mauritanian claims to the territory. He added, however, that any future referendum would require "detailed shaping," a clear indication Rabat would again oppose an independence option and demand that Saharans living in Morocco be allowed to vote.

Morocco will probably encounter little opposition in the fourth committee discussions. Mauritania accepted the Moroccan proposal last month, provided the court rules on Nouakchott's claim to Spanish Sahara. Algeria, which continues to maintain that it is an interested party with political and security interests to protect, is unlikely to oppose referral of the Saharan issue to the court because Algerian interests would be served by keeping the controversy on the back burner.

Spain has also indicated that it will acquiesce if the UN General Assembly decides to ask the court for an advisory opinion. At the same time, however, Madrid is continuing preparations for the referendum that it has promised to hold in Spanish Sahara next year. It has virtually completed a census that will determine the identity and number of people eligible to vote.

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Despite Moroccan claims to the contrary, the three African parties to the dispute still seem far from an agreement on the ultimate disposition of Spanish Sahara. Mauritania and Algeria probably hope that the court, faced with competing claims, will recommend a UN-supervised referendum enabling the indigenous people of Spanish Sahara to make their own choice. Both countries would oppose a demand by Morocco that its Saharans be allowed to participate in any future referendum.

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IRAN-USSR

The Shah's visit to the USSR begins today, his first since 1972.

The up-and-down relations between the two countries have never been warm, but they took a turn for the better last August when Moscow gave in to Iranian demands that it pay higher prices for Iranian natural gas exports to the USSR. Moscow has expressed interest in further economic ties, and this will figure prominently in the discussions with the Shah.

Other subjects will include the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. The Shah is likely to discuss his recent proposals for security and economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Moscow probably will push its long-standing proposal for an Asian collective security arrangement. Iran's support of US plans to expand military facilities at Diego Garcia could also be raised by Moscow.

Although Soviet-Iranian relations are improved, they are far from cordial. The Shah distrusts Moscow's activity in the Indian Ocean and what he regards as Soviet sponsorship of subversion in the Persian Gulf. The Shah objects especially to Soviet arms aid to the Baathist regime in Iraq and to South Yemen, which is headquarters for a leftist guerrilla movement seeking to overthrow the Iranian-supported government of Oman. He cites the alleged threat from Iraq and the Omani example as justification for his own arms buildup.

Although particularly unhappy with Moscow's arms aid to his adversaries in Baghdad, the Shah may wish to avoid or play down this issue while in Moscow. Raising it would invite a Soviet counterattack on the subject of Iran's military intervention on the side of the rebellious Iraqi Kurds. Baghdad has been pressing its Soviet ally to intervene with Tehran to obtain the withdrawal of Iranian support for the Kurds. Moscow has so far refused, not wanting to strain relations with Iran.

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ARGENTINA

Jose Lopez Rega, minister of social welfare and private secretary to President Maria Estela de Peron, returned to Argentina yesterday escorting the body of Eva Peron. The Peronist movement considers Evita, the second wife of the late president Juan Peron, a political saint.

The return of Eva Peron's body is intended to have an immediate political impact at home. Peron's third wife, Maria Estela, who succeeded to the presidency when he died last July, hopes the repatriation of Evita's remains will provide a rallying point for the much-needed leftist labor support. In an emotional address she announced the news to the nation, referring to Evita as the "spiritual chief of the nation."

Evita's return may be having the desired effect. Following the announcement, the Montoneros--a terrorist group--promptly returned the body of former president Pedro Aramburu, whom they claim to have assassinated several years ago. It was Aramburu who overthrew Juan Peron in 1955 and had Eva's body sent out of the country. The return of his remains--stolen a month ago--is believed to have considerable political significance.

During his five-day trip, Lopez Rega may have visited Libya to discuss several sizable trade deals and loans already under consideration.

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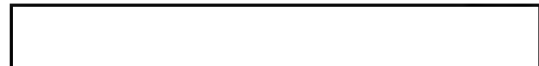
The US embassy in Tripoli believes that these reports of the extent of Libya's economic commitment may be exaggerated. Nevertheless, it feels the Libyans might be willing to make one or two large deals in order to establish an Arab bridgehead in Latin America. They would in turn expect Argentina to adopt a pro-Arab attitude.

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